

U.S.-UN Relations: Program Funding and PLO Status



United States Department of State
Bureau of Public Affairs
Washington, D.C.

Following are statements by Ambassador Thomas R. Pickering, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, and Sandra Vogelgesang, Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Organization Affairs, before the Subcommittee on Foreign Operations of the Senate Appropriations Committee, Washington, D.C., May 4, 1989, and a statement by Secretary Baker on May 1, 1989.

Ambassador Pickering, May 4, 1989

I am pleased to appear before you today to support the President's request for funding of international organizations and programs and to discuss U.S.-UN relations. This is a time of change at the United Nations. Peace-making and peacekeeping activities have advanced over the last several years in ways that a decade ago would have seemed impossible. With our active support, the United Nations is shutting down wars—most notably in Afghanistan, Iran/Iraq, and Namibia. The Secretary General is actively involved in finding solutions to disputes in the Western Sahara and Cambodia, and five Central American presidents have asked for UN help to verify elements of the Central American peace process including nonuse of territory, cessation of assistance to irregular forces, and the electoral process.

This is also a time of internal reform at the United Nations. Under the leadership of the Secretary General, progress has been made in reducing employment in the Secretariat, reducing the practice by Eastern-bloc countries of widespread secondment of personnel to the United Nations, which violates the concept of an independent international civil service, and the adoption of biennial consensus-based budgets. More is needed in these and other areas, including the establishment of priorities and the question of overlap and duplication in the area of economic and social activities. As a result of progress in reforms—to which we attach such great importance and for which we have labored steadily—and to encourage further progress, this Administration is seeking essentially full funding for its regular assessment and a first installment of the arrearages that we owe. Our financial support of a reformed United Nations is crucial because the potential of the Secretary General and the Security Council for resolving regional disputes has become a reality.

Transnational Problems

As regional conflicts become the object of serious negotiation rather than strident debate, I also see the UN system focusing more on vital issues of our time—narcotics control, anti-terrorism, the state of the global environment, AIDS [acquired immune deficiency syndrome], and economic

development strategies. The new cooperation between the United States and the U.S.S.R., as well as among the five permanent members of the Security Council, gives promise for renewed progress in tackling these transnational problems.

While this is a remarkably different picture from that of several years ago, there are still difficulties which we will need to face squarely at the United Nations. Efforts continue to address—on a one-sided and negative basis—issues involving the Arab-Israeli peace process and Israel itself. We will need to approach with intelligence, good judgment, and wisdom such important issues as our approach to the effort to reform UNESCO [UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization] and our future role, if any there, and the current efforts of the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization] to gain a seat as a "state" in some or all of the specialized agencies. While I understand that Ms. Vogelgesang will comment at greater length on the Administration's effort to deflect the current PLO drive to gain full membership in the WHO [World Health Organization], I should note here that Secretary Baker made it very clear earlier this week that he will recommend to the President that the United States withhold payments to any UN agency making any change in the PLO's present status as an observer organization.

Funding Voluntary Programs

Let me turn now to the Administration's budget request in support of UN voluntary programs. The President's fiscal year (FY) 1990 budget request contains \$209 million for the international organizations and programs account. This request will fund U.S. voluntary contributions for development, humanitarian, and scientific assistance programs and other activities undertaken by the United Nations as well as the Organization of American States (OAS).

Given the overall constraints on the federal budget, our total request is about \$17 million less than the appropriation for FY 1989. Within these limits, we have carefully reviewed the activities funded through this account and have recommended funding for 18 organizations and programs. Resources are concentrated among those programs which have long proven their value and directly serve specific U.S. interests. Proposed contributions for the UN Development Program (UNDP), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) account for more than three-quarters of the international organizations and programs account request. We also recommend \$16 million for the UN Afghanistan Emergency Trust Fund. With the withdrawal of Soviet troops from that country, a major international relief and reconstruction effort is getting underway. The U.S. contribution is a significant component of our overall Afghan strategy. It will allow us to influence the development of relief efforts and encourage contributions from other donor nations.

As the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, my remarks will be directed primarily toward those New York-based UN voluntary agencies for which I am directly responsible. Members of this subcommittee are well aware of the significant contributions of the UN Development Program or of UNICEF toward meeting the massive development and humanitarian needs of the developing world. The United States has played a leading role in the funding and management of these programs since their inception, and both agencies always have been headed by Americans, as they are today. The Administration's request for these programs is an expression of our support to those UN organizations which provide effective and worthwhile assistance to the developing world and which show fiscal responsibility in the man-

agement of their programs. The levels requested for these programs must be maintained to provide much-needed help to the world's poorest regions and to reflect the longstanding leadership role of the United States in these efforts.

The UNDP is the most important UN agency providing development assistance. Over 50% of the international organizations and programs account request—approximately \$107.8 million—is allocated to UNDP. Operating in some 150 countries and territories, it spent nearly \$1 billion last year supporting approximately 5,000 projects. UNDP programs address long-term economic and social problems as well as short-term emergency needs. Its coordinating role in the UN system permits it to undertake a multisectoral approach toward development that maximizes the impact of limited resources. Resources are allocated over a wide range of sectors—agriculture, industry, energy, communications, health, education. Recipient developing countries are required to provide a significant portion of project resources in the form of cash, supplies, and services.

Support for UNDP provides tangible benefits to the United States. By its contributions to the economies and societies of developing nations, it promotes international stability and helps create favorable conditions for expanded U.S. trade and investment. The U.S. economy also benefits directly from UNDP operations. For every dollar contributed by the United States in 1987, the United States received approximately \$1.86 in the form of salaries paid to U.S. experts, orders for project equipment and technical services, and expenses of UNDP headquarters in New York.

Perhaps no other UN program is better known and respected than UNICEF. This organization's approaches are consistent with our own development assistance and priorities and the humanitarian ideals of the American people. UNICEF encourages and assists the long-term development of welfare of mothers and children in 118 developing countries through educational programs and by providing goods and services to help meet basic needs. It provides important leadership in the field of child survival and development and has reduced, dramatically, infant and child mortality rates in these countries. UNICEF's programs of universal child immunization

and oral rehydration therapy have been immensely successful. These basic, low-cost health measures save the lives of nearly 1 million children every year.

Due to budgetary limitations, the FY 1990 request is some \$26 million less than the current appropriation. This reduction does not imply any change in the Administration's strong support for the organization.

International action on the environment is a high priority for the Administration. Contributions of \$8 million to the UN Environment Program (UNEP) and \$100,000 to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) are proposed. UNEP is particularly responsive to U.S. interests in protecting the global environment and promoting sustainable development. Its multilateral approach involves both industrialized and developing countries and promotes cooperation on such problems as acid rain, marine pollution, desertification, carbon dioxide buildup, and ozone depletion. Established last year, the intergovernmental panel is expected to become the primary forum for addressing the global problem of climate change as a result of increasing concentrations in the atmosphere of "greenhouse gases" from natural and manmade sources. The United States must play a leading role in any decisions which may be taken in response to this problem.

The funds requested for the voluntary agencies are the minimum needed to sustain economic and humanitarian programs which provide tangible benefits to the poorest, most vulnerable developing nations. Let me assure you that this Administration will make every effort to ensure these funds are not wasted on unnecessary administrative expenses. Working with other donors and management of the organizations, we will continue the successful efforts of the Reagan Administration to increase the delivery of quality programs to those most in need.

Deputy Assistant Secretary Vogelgesang, May 4, 1989

I am pleased to appear before you today to present the President's FY 1990 budget request of \$209 million for the international organizations and programs account. This request will fund U.S. voluntary contributions for development, humanitarian, and scientific assistance programs and activities undertaken by both the United Nations

and the Organization of American States. With your permission, I will submit for the record a full statement on our budget request.

PLO Admission Into WHO

I will now address the issue of PLO admission to membership in the World Health Organization and other UN agencies. This pressing matter has been highest on the agenda of the Bureau of International Organization Affairs for the last few weeks.

As you know, we are currently facing a serious challenge in the World Health Organization where the PLO, which has observer status, has submitted an application for membership for the "state of Palestine." This application is expected to be considered at the upcoming annual meeting of the World Health Assembly, which begins May 8. The PLO has also expressed interest in making similar applications in other UN agencies; success in WHO could encourage the PLO to do so.

U.S. Policy

The Administration fully appreciates congressional concerns over these developments. I can assure you we share those concerns. We are engaged in a major effort to head off these attempts, which, if successful, would politicize the specialized agencies—thus complicating their essential technical work—and would also be seriously detrimental to the search for Middle East peace. U.S. policy in this regard is clear.

- The self-declared Palestinian state, which the United States does not recognize, does not satisfy the generally accepted criteria under international law for statehood and, thus, does not qualify for membership in UN agencies.

Secretary Baker, May 1, 1989

The United States vigorously opposes the admission of the PLO to membership in the World Health Organization or any other UN agencies. We have worked, and will continue to work, to convince others of the harm that the PLO's admission would cause to the Middle East peace process and to the UN system.

Political questions such as this should not be raised in specialized agencies, because such politicization detracts from the important technical work of these organizations.

To emphasize the depth of our concern, I will recommend to the President that the United States make no further contributions—voluntary or assessed—to any international organization which makes any change in the PLO's present status as an observer organization.

- The United States is opposed to the introduction of such a divisive political issue into the technical work of the specialized agencies.

- Moreover, we are convinced that any effort to bestow legitimacy on the self-proclaimed Palestinian state would harm efforts underway in the region to promote peace. The Arab-Israeli problem can be resolved only through a process of negotiations between the parties, not through unilateral acts by either side—such as the declaration of Palestinian statehood—that seek to pre-judge the outcome of such negotiations.

To emphasize the depth of our concern, the Secretary announced on May 1 [see box] that he will recommend to the President that the United States

make no further contributions—voluntary or assessed—to any international organization which makes any change in the PLO's present status as an observer organization. This would be a major step, and the Secretary's statement should leave no doubt in others' minds as to how seriously the United States views this issue.

To ensure that our concerns over this issue are clearly understood by others, we have undertaken a series of worldwide demarches in capitals, reinforced by high-level meetings with embassy representatives in Washington. With the support of like-minded allies, we have urged that, at a minimum, some mechanism be found to defer consideration of the membership application. We just completed useful meetings here in Washington with WHO Director General Nakajima—who clearly appreciates the potential danger to his organization posed by the PLO's efforts and supports efforts to avoid a vote on this explosive issue. We hope that other states will conclude that it would be in the best interests of all if the World Health Assembly deferred action on the application.

I can assure you that we will continue our vigorous efforts to oppose the admission of the self-proclaimed state of Palestine as a member in WHO or any other organization in the UN system. We appreciate the expressions of congressional support we have received for this policy. ■

Published by the United States Department of State • Bureau of Public Affairs
Office of Public Communication • Editorial Division • Washington, D.C. • May 1989
Editor: Sharon R. Haynes • This material is in the public domain and may be reprinted without permission; citation of this source is appreciated.

PA/OAP, Rm. 5815A
United States Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

OFFICIAL BUSINESS

PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE \$300

Address Correction Requested

BULK RATE
POSTAGE & FEES PAID
U.S. Department of State
Permit No. G-130